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ABSTRACT

A Study was conducted to answer two questions: Is the student-perceived ability of white teachers to relate to students a function of the ethnic background of the student group? Are different characteristics of teaching style associated with white teachers' ability-to-relate to student groups of differing ethnic background? Black and white high school students, 50 each, viewed and rated videotapes of 50 white intern teachers presenting a 5- to 7-minute lesson on "Black Power." Each intern was rated on ability-to-relate and on seven characteristics of teaching style. Findings: White students, on the average, rated teachers higher on ability-to-relate than did black ones, although 13 of the 50 were rated more favorably by black students. Ratings of teachers by students in the two groups were not similar. On ability-to-relate and on three teaching style characteristics the correlations of ratings between racial groups were negative. The same teacher was viewed quite differently, relative to the other teachers, in the two groups. Seven of the 14 correlations between scores on ability-to-relate and the teaching style characteristics were statistically significant. Conclusions: The ability of teachers to relate to students is likely to vary substantially as a function of the ethnic background of the student group. Characteristics of teaching style contribute to ability-to-relate differentially in student groups of differing ethnic background. (JS)

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THE ABILITY OF WHITE TEACHERS TO RELATE TO BLACK STUDENTS AND TO WHITE STUDENTS

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FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
IN TEACHING

Technical Report No. 10

THE ABILITY OF WHITE TEACHERS TO RELATE TO BLACK STUDENTS AND TO WHITE STUDENTS

Robert W. Heath

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Introductory Statement

The central mission of the Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching is to contribute to the improvement of teaching in American schools. Given the urgency of the times, technological developments, and advances in knowledge from the behavioral sciences about teaching and learning, the Center works on the assumption that a fundamental reformulation of the future role of the teacher will take place. The Center's mission is to specify as clearly, and on as empirical a basis as possible, the direction of that reformulation, to help shape it, to fashion and validate programs for training and retraining reachers in accordance with it, and to develop and test materials and procedures for use in these new training programs.

The Center is at work in three interrelated problem areas: (a) Heuristic Teaching, which aims at promoting self-motivated and sustained inquiry in students, emphasizes affective as well as cognitive processes, and places a high premium upon the uniqueness of each pupil, teacher, and learning situation; (b) The Environment for Teaching, which aims at making schools more flexible so that pupils, teachers, and learning materials can be brought together in ways that take account of their many differences; and (c) Teaching the Disadvantaged, which aims to determine whether more heuristically oriented teachers and more open kinds of schools can and should be developed to improve the education of those currently labeled as the poor and the disadvantaged.

Technical Report No. 10, presented here, reports the differences between black high school students and white high school students in the way they rated 50 white teachers on the teachers' ability to relate to them and on characteristics of teaching style. The study was done by the Educational Community Organization project in a effort to contribute to the resolution of the recurring complaint of black students that teachers don't relate well to them. The project is part of the Teaching the Disadvantaged program.

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to answer these two questions:

1. Is the student-perceived ability of white teachers to relate to students a function of the ethnic background of the student group?

2. Are different characteristics of teaching style associated with white teachers' ability-to-relate to student groups of differing ethnic background?

Fifty black high school students and 50 white high school students viewed and rated videotapes of 50 teacher-interns. Each intern was rated on ability-to-relate and seven characteristics of teaching style.

There was a significant interaction between the ability of a teacher to relate to students and the ethnic background of the student group. Also, some characteristics of teaching style were differentially important in their contribution to ability-to-relate in the two student groups.

Knowledge of which teaching style best enables a teacher to relate to student groups of differing ethnic background may be useful in the training, selection, and assignment of teachers.

THE ABILITY OF WHITE TEACHERS TO RELATE TO BLACK STUDENTS AND TO WHITE STUDENTS[1]

Robert W. Heath
Stanford University

One of the most frequent complaints of high school students, especially minority students, is that some teachers cannot relate to them. However ambiguous the verb "relate" may be to those concerned with the systematic study of teaching, its use appears to represent an earnest effort by students to communicate a real complaint about some of their teachers.

This study attempted to answer two questions:

1. Is the student-perceived ability of white teachers to relate to students a function of the ethnic background of the student group?

2. Are different characteristics of teaching style associated with white teachers' ability-to-relate to student groups of differing ethnic background?

If data indicate an affirmative answer to these questions, then the identification of those characteristics of teaching style most appropriate to ethnically different student groups would be valuable in the training, selection, and assignment of teachers.

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[1]To a greater degree than usual, this study was made possible by the assistance of others. Prof. Richard E. Snow suggested the availability of the videotapes and that suggestion led to plan for the research. Linda Raffel, Yvonne Wright, Willie B. Moore, and Larnders Roy managed the rating sessions with complete responsibility and maintained extraordinary rapport with the high school students. Dene R. Lawson managed the video equipment crew with great efficiency while under considerable time pressure. Prof. Janet Elashoff provided invaluable statistical consulting.

Method

The Stanford Teacher Education program makes extensive use of videotape techniques in its program for teacher interns. As a by-product of these activities, a store of video-recorded teaching is available for research purposes. From this source it was possible to retrieve videotapes of 50 white teacher-interns, each presenting a single five- to seven-minute lesson on "Black Power." The recordings were made at the end of the trainees' intensive summer program that included frequent microteaching experience. The 50 taped lessons were divided into 10 randomly drawn groups of five teachers each. Each group of five lessons was combined on a single videotape for presentation.

Subjects

The subjects were 100 high school students who responded to an announcement in their schools. Each volunteer received six dollars for participating in the study. Half the students (all black) were recruited from a de facto segregated high school serving a black suburban community. About four months before these data were gathered, the high school attended by the black students participating in this study was closed for several days by a student sit-in and boycott. One of the students' demands was for the transfer of several teachers charged with not being able to relate to black students. The other 50 students (all white) were recruited similarly from a high school serving a predominantly upper-middle class, white, suburban community. These too high schools have contiguous attendance boundaries.

Instruments

Two rating scales were used. Scale A included four graphic rating items; each item was intended to reflect an aspect of the ability-to-relate of the teachers. Scale B included seven questions in graphic rating scale form about characteristics of the teachers' style of teaching. In Scale A the rating format is from low to high; while in Scale B, except for item No. 1, the ratings are in the opposite direction--high to low. Both scales are reproduced in the Appendix. The items in both rating scales were developed by a committee composed of black parents and project personnel. Thus, the advantages of using available, previously used teacher rating scales were sacrificed in an attempt to focus attention on aspects of teaching style judged most important by minority group parents.

Rating Sessions

The rating sessions for black students were conducted in a store-front office located centrally in a shopping center in the black community. The sessions were conducted by black parents. All students were given a practice session of videotape rating before the actual rating session to familiarize them with the procedure and to provide an opportunity to ask questions. Five students were randomly selected to view one of the ten videotapes (each showing five of the 50 teacher selected) and rate the teachers on Scale A only. These five students then viewed a different tape (of five different teachers) and rated those teachers on Scale B. The tapes were stopped after each teacher's presentation to allow the students time for rating. This procedure continued until all teachers were rated on both scales and all black students had rated

two tapes. Each teacher was rated by one group of five students on Scale A and by a different group of five students on Scale B. No teacher was rated on both scales by the same students. This procedure was repeated for the 50 white students. Rating sessions for the white students were conducted by white adults in a university audiovisual center near their school.

Results

Summary statistics were obtained for Scale A on both racial groups. These results are shown in Table 1.[2]

The internal consistency of Scale A is sufficient in both groups for analysis of group differences. The distribution of total scores is negatively skewed for the white group (sk = -.65) but is nearly normal for the black students (sk = .07).

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[2]The results are presented in the simplest tabular form possible. This format does not suggest the methods of analysis used. In this instance a nested, mixed-model ANOVA (tape x race x intern with tape x student within tape and race) was performed using the BMD08V program.

Source	df	MS	F
Tape	9	113.022	
Race	1	2856.050	12.591**
Intern (tape)	40	71.660	3.109**
Student (tape x race)	80	24.829	
Race x Intern (tape)	40	77.426	3.359**

** Significant at the .01 level

Table 1

Summary Statistics for Scale A: Ability-to-Relate

Item No.	Black Students						White Students					
	Mean	S.D.	Item Intercorrelations				Mean	S.D.	Item Intercorrelations			
			1	2	3	4			1	2	3	4
1.	3.73	1.99		.87	.90	.70	5.07	1.68		.78	.94	.73
2.	4.00	1.89			.85	.71	5.36	1.26			.78	.67
3.	3.82	2.00				.68	4.90	1.71				.71
4.	4.42	2.03					5.41	1.41				
Total Score[a]	15.96	4.94					20.74	3.53				
Reliability[b]	.76						.72					

[a]Difference between means of the total scores significant at the .01 level

[b]Cronbach's alpha

Each of the items in Scale B (Teaching Style) was intended to be a noncumulative rating of that aspect of the teachers' classroom style. Therefore, no internal consistency estimates of total score were made. The mean ratings for all teachers, their standard deviations, the intercorrelations of the teaching style items, and the reliability coefficient for each item are given by racial group in Table 2. It should be noted that the polarity of item No. 1 is the reverse of the other six items, therefore, its scoring was reversed.

Table 2

Summary Statistics for Scale B: Characteristics of Teaching Style

Item No.	Black Students									White Students								
			Item Intercorrelations									Item Intercorrelations						
	$\bar{X}$	s	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	$\bar{X}$	s	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Listens to student responses	2.64	.94		.48	.47	.47	.55	.41	.49	2.22	.84		.26	.30	.49	.51	.54	.29
2. Indicates what is to be learned	3.70	1.21			.80	.85	.78	.73	.58	3.10	1.01			.45	.70	.43	.47	.32
3. Self-confident	3.52	1.21				.74	.76	.75	.54	2.55	.80				.68	.60	.52	.60
4. Knows the subject well	3.76	1.31					.78	.72	.60	2.76	.90					.61	.65	.47
5. Seems to enjoy teaching	3.24	1.08						.67	.61	2.69	.88						.58	.52
6. Manages the class well	3.14	1.18							.66	2.92	1.04							.45
7. Speaks clearly	2.94	1.04								2.34	.83							
Item reliability (Cronbach's alpha)			.37	.62	.63	.62	.50	.60	.41			.58	.66	.50	.66	.60	.71	.62

It is important to see if the teachers were rank-ordered similarly on the various scales by students in the two racial groups. The correlations between mean rating from black students vs. mean rating from white students for total score on Scale A and each rating on Scale B are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Correlation of Mean Ratings
Between Racial Groups

Scale A Total Score	-.15**
Scale B	
Item #1	-.22
#2	-.08
#3	.16
#4	-.01
#5	.12
#6	.14
#7	.16

**In the ANOVA the interaction between teacher and race of student is significant at the .01 level.

To estimate the relative importance of the seven teaching style characteristics in the two groups, stepwise regression analyses were performed. The results of these analyses are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Stepwise Regression: Teaching Style Characteristics as Predictors; Total Score on Ability-to-Relate as Criterion

Item No.	Black Students					White Students				
	r with Ability-to-Relate	Step No.	R	R^2	Increase in R^2	r with Ability-to-Relate	Step No.	R	R^2	Increase in R^2
1. Listens to student responses	.28*	2	.398	.158	.012	.36*	1	.360	.130	N.A.
2. Indicates what is to be learned	.22	4	.420	.176	.009	.07	5	.412	.170	.003
3. Self-confident	.24	7	.441	.194	.001	.11	6	.414	.171	.002
4. Knows the subject well	.31*	5	.438	.191	.015	.20	4	.408	.167	.002
5. Seems to enjoy teaching	.30*	6	.438	.193	.001	.27*	2	.374	.140	.010
6. Manages the class well	.33*	3	.409	.167	.009	.11	3	.406	.165	.025
7. Speaks clearly	.38*	1	.383	.147	N.A.	.12	7	.414	.172	.000

*Significantly different from zero at the .05 level

Discussion

The item analyses and reliability estimates for Scale A (Ability-to-Relate) indicated that the scale was sufficiently reliable as used by both racial groups. The white students, on the average, rated the 50 teachers higher on this ability than did the black students. However, 13 of the 50 teachers were rated more favorably by black students.

The ratings of teachers by students in the two racial groups were not similar. On ability-to-relate and three of the seven characteristics of teaching style in Table 3, the correlation of ratings between racial groups were actually negative, though small. The same teacher was viewed quite differently, relative to the other teachers, in the two racial groups.

Seven of the 14 correlations between scores on ability-to-relate and the teaching style characteristics were statistically significant. The relative importance of at least one of the teaching style characteristics was substantially different for the two student groups. Whereas "clarity of speech" was the characteristic most highly associated with ability-to-relate for black students, it was <u>least</u> important in the data from the white students.

The samples of both students and teachers used in this study have obvious limitations. The instruments used were relatively crude and without the benefits of extensive developmental effort. The seven characteristics of teaching style used are obviously only a few of many that could have been used. Even so, two conclusions seem warranted:

1. The ability of teachers to relate to students is likely to vary substantially as a function of the ethnic background of the student group.

2. Characteristics of teaching style contribute to ability-to-relate differentially in student groups of differing ethnic background.

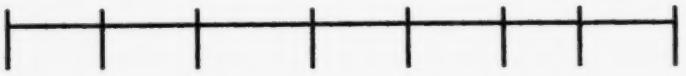
The qualitative nature of these differences between groups makes sociopsychological sense. For example, the teaching characteristic "speaks clearly" was most highly correlated with ability-to-relate for the black students. That same teaching characteristic was relatively unimportant for white students. The black students are, of course, attempting to learn from a teacher speaking in a dialect different from their own. One might suspect that if white students were rating black teachers speaking in a Negro dialect, clarity of speech might be seen as an important variable in the teachers' ability to relate to them.

More needs to be known about the ability of teachers to relate to students of differing ethnic backgrounds. More needs to be known about the patterns of teaching style that contribute to this ability in relation to different ethnic groups. Improved teacher training (both preservice and in-service), selection, and assignment might be possible, given this information.

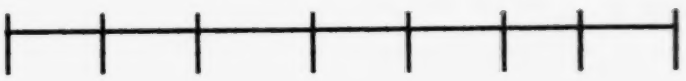
Appendix 1

Scale A: Ability-to-Relate

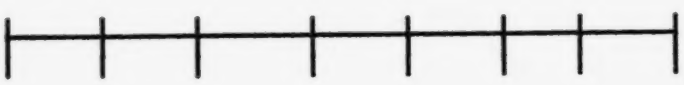
1. How well do you believe this teacher can relate to you?

Very poorly  Very well

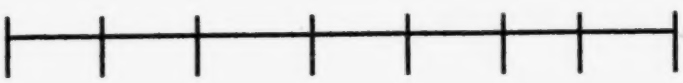
2. Do you think this teacher would be accepted by students in your school?

Not acceptable to all  Very well accepted

3. Do you think this person would be a good teacher for you?

Very bad  Very good

4. How well do you think this teacher would accept you as a person?

Would not accept me  Would accept me

Appendix 2

Scale B: Characteristics of Teaching Style

1. Does the teacher listen to student responses?

Ignores students — Listen very carefully

2. How well does the teacher indicate what is to be learned?

Extremely well — Very poorly

3. How self-confident is the teacher?

Very self-confident — total lack self-confidence

4. How well does the teacher seem to know the subject?

Extremely well — He appears totally uninformed

5. Does the teacher seem to enjoy teaching?

very much — Not at all

6. How well does the teacher manage the class?

Very well — Very poorly

7. How clearly does the teacher speak?

Very clearly — Very difficult to understand